



Department of Justice

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PARKING HEATER COMPANY PLEADS GUILTY IN PRICE-FIXING SCHEME

WASHINGTON – Espar Inc., a seller of parking heaters for commercial vehicles, pleaded guilty to participating in a price-fixing scheme, the Department of Justice announced today.

Espar Inc. pleaded guilty to a one-count felony charge in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York in Brooklyn. According to the charge, Espar conspired with others to fix prices for parking heaters in the United States and elsewhere in North America from at least as early as Oct. 1, 2007, until Dec. 31, 2012. Parking heaters are devices that heat the interior compartment of a motor vehicle independent of the operation of the vehicle's engine. In addition to paying a criminal fine, Espar has agreed to cooperate in the department's ongoing investigation. The plea agreement is subject to court approval, and Espar is scheduled to be sentenced on June 5, 2015.

"Today's plea demonstrates the Antitrust Division's commitment to holding companies accountable for conspiracies that fix prices on parts used in every day products," said Assistant Attorney General Bill Baer of the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division. "The Antitrust Division will vigorously prosecute companies that engage in schemes that subvert normal competitive processes and defraud American consumers and businesses."

According to the charge, Espar and its co-conspirators discussed parking heater prices for commercial vehicles, agreed to set a price floor for parking heater kits for commercial vehicles sold to aftermarket customers, and agreed to coordinate the timing and amount of price increases for parking heaters for commercial vehicles sold to aftermarket customers. The companies carried out the agreement and exchanged information for the purpose of monitoring and enforcing adherence to the agreement.

Espar is charged with price fixing in violation of the Sherman Act, which carries maximum penalties of a \$100 million criminal fine for corporations. The maximum fine may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crime, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

Today's plea is the result of an ongoing federal antitrust investigation being handled by the Antitrust Division's New York Office, with assistance from the FBI's New York Field Office. Anyone with information concerning price fixing or other anticompetitive conduct in the

parking heater industry should contact the Antitrust Division's Citizen Complaint Center at 1-888-647-3258 or visit www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.html.

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